



Mental Health Update March 30, 2007

Designated Agency Study Public Forums with Consumers & Family Members

Vermont's Designated Agencies provide critically important Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services to Vermonters throughout the state. In 2004, the Pacific Health Policy Group – a consulting firm – conducted a study of the Designated Agencies to learn more about the services they provide and how well they are meeting their mission. As part of the study, the consultants met with consumers and family members to learn firsthand about the Designated Agencies' services from the people who actually use them.

The Pacific Health Policy Group was recently asked by the state to perform a follow-up study of the Designated Agencies to identify what has changed – for better or worse – since 2004, and to help the Agency of Human Services craft a strategy for ensuring their sustainability over the next five to ten years. As in 2004, one of the most important aspects of the study will be talking to consumers and family members about their experiences.

Specifically, the consultants will be hosting two statewide forums which consumers and their families will be asked to describe their experiences such as:

- ✓ What services are you receiving through the Designated Agency?
- ✓ What do you like and dislike about getting services through the Designated Agency?
- ✓ Has staff turnover affected your care?
- ✓ Do you think the Designated Agency works effectively on behalf of consumers?
- ✓ Are there better ways the Designated Agency could meet your needs?
- ✓ Do you have suggestions that could help the Designated Agencies to provide services more efficiently?

The meetings will not include anyone from the Designated Agency and will not be recorded. The information will be reported in the aggregate only . Participating in the discussion will have no effect on your eligibility for services.

We encourage you to participate in the Consumer Forums which will be held:

APRIL 4th at the Howe Center in Rutland, VT from 4-7 pm

APRIL 5th at the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, from 4-7 pm

You can come and express your views any time during the Forum hours and do not have to register to attend.

If you have questions regarding the forums, please call Candi Young at 802-241-2234.

If you can not participate in the Public Forums, but wish to have your thoughts included in the study, you can go online to and fill out a confidential survey that will be included with the other consumer feedback. Please access the survey at www.phpg.com and look for the link to The Forums.

FUTURES PROJECT

Advisory Committee Actions

The Futures Advisory Committee took several actions at the March 26th meeting to study the current governance structure for the Vermont State Hospital and to consider changes in governance. It also discussed the broader governance issue of retaining the Board of Mental Health, a statutory body that has been inactive for a number of years.

The Advisory Committee voted to:

- 1) Endorse the concept of retaining the Board of Mental Health and to establish a work group to develop specific recommendations
- 2) Recommend that the Vermont State Hospital continue to have a governing body with clear authority for all members and request that the Governor act on public nominees to appoint to the VSH Governing Body.

In other action, the Advisory Committee strongly endorsed a community residential resolution to support collaborative discussion between the State and local community partners for the purpose of creating mental health treatment programs. In fulfilling its legal obligation to provide mental health services to all eligible persons, the State should not yield to community opposition to the placement of residential treatment facilities. The resolution recommends that the Vermont Department of Health take steps to develop and locate additional residential treatment programs and provide services by fiscal year 2008.

Legislature Advances Bill for Independent Evaluation

The House Human Services Committee marked up and voted out S.124, which would commission an independent study to review the planning that has been done to date for replacement of the Vermont State Hospital. The study would include:

- exploration of the State's options for providing inpatient psychiatric services
- feasibility of securing federal funding to support the operations of one or more inpatient psychiatric programs that could be considered an IMD or Institution for Mental Disease
- consideration of the needs for serving the Corrections population.

The study would be funded with \$100,000 from the capital appropriation that the legislature authorized for Futures planning purposes in 2006. A final report of the study would be due June 30, 2007.

Retreat Healthcare Proposes Partnership with Futures Project

The Brattleboro psychiatric hospital has proposed to work with the State to establish two specialized programs of care, one a 16-bed adult inpatient unit and the other a 12-bed adult residential program. The Retreat has participated in the work of the Futures project and has made this proposal to partner with the State and others to help serve the mental health needs of Vermonters.

Corrections Inpatient Work Group

The minutes of the Corrections Inpatient Work Group from March 19th are posted on the website.

VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL CENSUS

The Vermont State Hospital Census was 53 as of midnight Wednesday night. The average census for the past 45 days was 48.